DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 482 833 SP 041 805

AUTHOR	Hirsch, Eric; Samuelsen, Shelby
TITLE	Improving Teacher Quality: Teacher Policy Inventories.
INSTITUTION	National Conference of State Legislatures, Denver, CO.
ISBN	ISBN-1-58024-033-X
PUB DATE	1999-12-00
NOTE	13p.; Published 12 to 18 times per year. Theme issue.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Conference of State Legislatures, 1560 Broadway, Suite 700, Denver,CO 80202-5140. Tel: 303-830-2200; Fax: 303-863-8003.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
JOURNAL CIT	State Legislative Report; v24 n9 Dec 1999
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Faculty Development; Higher Education; Mentors; Preservice Teacher Education; State Standards; Teacher Certification; Teacher Competencies; *Teacher Qualifications; Teacher Recruitment; Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS	Maine; Missouri; North Carolina; *State Policy

ABSTRACT

At least 36 states have made some changes to their teacher policies by passing more than 100 bills to strengthen preparation and licensure standards and provide additional funding for teacher mentoring and professional development. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) has been a catalyst in bringing teacher policy issues to the forefront of federal and state education agendas and is working in several partner states toward enacting policies based on recommendations put forth in its publication, "What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future." Each partner state commissioned a status of teaching report using a policy inventory created by NCTAF (which addresses getting serious about standards, reinventing teacher preparation and professional development, fixing teacher recruitment and putting qualified teachers in every classroom, encouraging and rewarding teacher knowledge and skills, and creating schools organized for student and teacher success). This paper outlines common themes found across all state inventories and examines three states (North Carolina, Missouri, and Maine) to provide insight into how states are tackling teacher quality issues and how various policy strategies are being implemented. Common themes include: clear measurable, objective standards for teacher preparation and licensure are not common, student and teacher standards are not well aligned, and teacher supply and demand varies tremendously across districts. (SM)

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ED 482 833

NCSL STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT

December 1999
Vol. 24, No. 9

Improving Teacher Quality: Teacher Policy Inventories

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By Eric Hirsch, *Senior Policy Specialist*
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In 1999—as was the case in 1998 when about four-fifths of states made changes in some area of teacher policy—state legislatures across the country made teacher issues a top priority. Educators and lawmakers are realizing that the success of many education reforms—academic standards, class size reduction, new technology—may depend upon the knowledge and skill of classroom teachers.

At least 36 states made some change to their teacher policies through the passage of more than 100 bills that strengthened preparation and licensure standards and provided additional funds for teacher mentoring and professional development. Colorado and Maine enacted legislation that develops performance-based licensure; California established the California Peer Assistance and Review Program, requiring performance goals for individual teachers that are aligned with student learning goals; while Maryland's Quality Teacher Incentive Act provides state grants to help county boards develop teacher mentoring programs.

At least 36 states made some change to their teacher policies in 1999.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) has been a catalyst in bringing teacher policy issues to the forefront of the federal and state education agendas. With the release of *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* in September 1996, NCTAF put forth recommendations for improving the quality of teaching and aligning policies that affect teachers, arguing for the creation of a teaching career continuum. NCTAF has been working in several partner states toward enacting policies based on these recommendations.

Each partner state commissioned a status of teaching report, using a policy inventory created by NCTAF. The inventories provide a unique opportunity to learn about struggles and best practices. This report outlines common themes found across all state inventories and examines three states in depth to provide more insight into how states are tackling teacher quality issues and how various policy strategies are being implemented.

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What Matters Most: NCTAF and the Policy Inventory Process

The commission, directed by Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University and chaired by Governor James B. Hunt Jr. of North Carolina, is composed of many distinguished educational leaders, including former state Representatives Annette Morgan of Missouri and Juanita Millender-McDonald of California (now a U.S. congresswoman).

Since the publication of *What Matters Most*, NCTAF has been working in partnership with 12 states—Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio and Oklahoma—to analyze state teacher policies and practices. As of summer 1999, a state policy team comprised of researchers and state and local policymakers in 11 of the 12 initial states (Alabama, Idaho and Washington now are partners) had completed a policy inventory to assess the status of teaching. These policy teams ranged from a few researchers in some partner states to more than 100 members in Missouri.

NCTAF has been working in partnership with 12 states to analyze state teacher policies and practices.

All the partner states conducted the audit using a policy inventory framework designed by NCTAF. Questions were derived from the policy recommendation contained in *What Matters Most*, which urges lawmakers to design an aligned system of rigorous performance-based standards for teacher preparation, licensure and professional development. Answers to framework questions are meant to allow states to compare their progress to that of other states and to the commission's ultimate goal of ensuring a competent, caring and qualified teacher in every classroom by 2006. The inventory is intended not only to inform policymakers and the public of the status of teaching, but also to create a long-term strategic process that will allow for new and better data collection and reporting strategies.

NCTAF Teacher Policy Recommendations

I. Get serious about standards, for both students and teachers
- Establish professional standards boards in every state.
- Insist on accreditation for all schools of education.
- Close inadequate schools of education.
- License teachers based on demonstrated performance, including tests of subject matter knowledge, teaching knowledge, and teaching skill.
- Use National Board standards as the benchmark for accomplished teaching.

II. Reinvent teacher preparation and professional development
- Organize teacher education and professional development programs around standards for students and teachers.
- Develop extended, graduate-level teacher preparation programs that provide a year-long internship in a professional development school.
- Create and fund mentoring programs for beginning teachers, along with evaluation of teaching skills.
- Create stable, high-quality sources of professional development.

III. Fix teacher recruitment and put qualified teachers every classroom

- Increase the ability of low-wealth districts to pay for qualified teachers, and insist that districts hire only qualified teachers.
- Redesign and streamline district hiring.
- Eliminate barriers to teacher mobility.
- Aggressively recruit high-need teachers and provide incentives for teaching in shortage areas.
- Develop high-quality pathways to teaching for a wide range of recruits.

IV. Encourage and reward teacher knowledge and skill

- Develop a career continuum for teaching linked to assessments and compensations systems that reward knowledge and skill.
- Remove incompetent teachers.
- Set goals and enact incentives for National Board certification in every state and district. Aim to certify 105,000 teachers in this decade, one for every school in the United States.

V. Create schools that organized for student and teacher success

- Flatten hierarchies and reallocate resources to send more dollars to the front lines of schools: Invest more in teachers and technology and less in nonteaching personnel.
- Provide venture capital in the form of challenge grants to schools for teacher learning linked to school improvement and rewards for team efforts that lead to improved practice and greater learning.
- Select, prepare, and retain principals who understand teaching and learning and who can lead high-performing schools.

Although all the NCTAF recommendations have been implemented by state legislatures across the country, no single state or district has successfully implemented all facets.

Although all the NCTAF recommendations have been implemented by state legislatures across the country, no single state or district has successfully implemented all facets to create a continuum of policies and practices that address all areas of teacher policy consistently. As can be seen in the case studies that follow, several common themes emerged from the inventories in all the partner states, especially in regard to data collection and the alignment of student and teacher standards.

Case Studies: Teacher Policy in Three States

North Carolina

In 1997, North Carolina passed the Excellent Schools Act, the first legislation to directly employ the commission's multifaceted approach. The bill revised teacher tenure and certification requirements, increased overall salaries, required performance reports from all schools of education, and provided for professional development opportunities. As a NCTAF partner

state, the North Carolina Policy Group conducted a thorough state inventory, including an assessment of the current state climate, specific areas for improvement, and recommendations for future state activity.

North Carolina's inventory highlights a strong system of student standards and assessment. North Carolina's assessment of student performance is based upon state standards and incorporated into the State Board of Education's ABC Plan of Accountability. Progress is assessed in reading and math (grades three through eight) and writing (grades four through seven). Each school is provided a relative starting point, determined by a state-derived formula of past performance and other student characteristics, and each year performance targets are reassessed. The first ABC statewide report for grades three through eight was released in 1997, with 32.4 percent classified as exemplary schools and 7.5 percent as low-performing schools. Nearly 93 percent of schools met at least one of their growth targets. Student achievement—by both state measures and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)—is rising. North Carolina fourth and eighth graders made greater gains on the NAEP assessment on math than children of any other state.

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The North Carolina inventory highlights two significant strengths in state activity on teacher quality: 1) the development of high standards and 2) rewards for teachers and professional development. The Excellent Schools Act provides gradually escalating salary increases, attempting to meet the national average by 2001. By 2000, starting salaries will be at $25,000 and the maximum salary for a teacher with a B.A. degree and 29 or more years of experience will move from $40,060 to $45,850. National Board certified teachers earn a 12 percent salary increase over the 10-year life of the certificate, while teachers who earn a standards-based master's degree (a new degree program created in the Excellent Schools Act) earn a 10 percent raise. To ensure high standards for teachers, the state has created a high cutoff score on its initial licensure exam (Praxis), developed standards-based licensure requirements, and run a pilot version of a performance-based licensure system.

North Carolina has initiated several professional development programs and partnerships with universities and professional development schools. The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching offers a series of week-long seminars in residence for professional development. According to the inventory, in 1996, North Carolina spent approximately $25 million for professional development. Difficulty in creating a coherent, statewide professional development program was cited because of tension between state mandates and school district decisions on professional development offerings.

Although high standards for both teachers and students have been established in North Carolina, the inventory found no specific alignment between the two sets of standards nor the effective incorporation of the standards into teacher preparation or professional development. In an effort to rectify the problem, legislation now mandates the State Board of Education to revise and realign student standards with standards for teacher preparation, administrator preparation, testing, textbooks and professional development. It remains to be seen if this ambitious goal will be realized

Another major concern for North Carolina is the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in districts designated as low-performing. The inventory indicated that in low-performing districts teachers are more likely to be teaching "out of field" (in a subject for which they do not have a college major or minor) or with a substandard license. The legislature has invested $2.5 million per year in scholarships to attract people of quality to teaching; however, there is no effective state effort or funding to recruit or support teachers specifically to high-need areas. Furthermore, similar to several states across the country, North Carolina found inadequate statewide data on teacher supply and demand. The legislative requirement for conducting teacher supply and demand studies rests with the University of North Carolina general administration; however, the last systematic study it conducted occurred in the 1980s. The Excellent Schools Act now mandates teacher preparation programs to track data on graduates for the purpose of program review. The data collection requires cooperative tracking between teacher preparation programs, the Department of Public Instruction and school districts.

The Excellent Schools Act now mandates teacher preparation programs to track data on graduates for program review.

Although North Carolina often is cited as a leader in teacher policies, the inventory concluded with issues that the state will need to address as it continues to enact teacher quality policies.

- Alignment between teacher standards and student standards and performance;
- Alignment between teacher standards and teacher preparation programs;
- Disparities in the placement of teachers and the difficulty low-performing and low-wealth districts have to attract and retain high quality teachers;
- Use of teachers in subject areas for which they have not been adequately trained;
- Implementation of provisions of the Excellent Schools Act
- Conflict between local school district control and the role of the state in mandating programs and best practices that have been proven effective.

The North Carolina policy group recommended that the state explore alternative means to make teaching in low-performing districts more attractive, to emphasize the importance of teacher standards, and to work to align teacher standards into their professional development and preparation programs.

Missouri

The Missouri inventory was conducted under the direction of The Missouri Commission on the Future of Teaching (MCFT), which included more than 100 individuals representing the K-12 education system, higher education, professional education associations, the state legislature, business and funding agencies. While the North Carolina inventory included detailed information for current reform and statistics, Missouri focused on determining its recommendations and goals for future state policy in teacher quality.

Similar to North Carolina, Missouri findings related to statewide student and teachers standards were positive. The state adopted *Show-Me Standards* for students and developed the

Continuing Approval of Professional Education Program for teachers. As of 1997, Missouri had not established a professional standards board; however, MCFT clearly articulated the need for this type of guidance and authority. MCFT argued that a professional standards board should, " ... have sole responsibility for establishing and maintaining professional standards in a timely and efficient fashion." The state commission also contends that the state should be extremely "vigilant" in its teacher preparation program approval process. Deficient programs should be identified, given time to correct their problems, given an opportunity to demonstrate that they have addressed these problems, and, if they have not, appropriate actions, including denial of program approval should ensue.

The need for higher standards and requirements for teacher licensure and preparation was noted as a significant concern by the MCFT. The inventory indicated that the state's general teacher education and licensure requirements were not especially rigorous, pointing to low GPA thresholds for entry into teacher education programs and low cutoff scores on the required exit exam for teachers. MCFT argued the significance of moving from licensure based on course requirements toward demonstration of individual skills and performance. In Missouri, teachers who participate in the career ladder program and assume additional roles as mentors or teacher-leaders, or in curriculum development or professional development offerings, are eligible for salary supplements of $1,500 to $5,000, depending on teaching experience and classroom performance. Similar to North Carolina, Missouri noted concerns about student standards and teacher preparation alignment. MCFT argued for the alignment of statewide standards with standards for teacher licensure. Although most teacher preparation programs indicated that they require at least 12 weeks of student teaching, there is no mandate for a minimum number of weeks for clinical experience.

Missouri teachers who participate in the career ladder program and assume additional roles as mentors or teacher-leaders, or in curriculum development or professional development offerings, are eligible for salary supplements of $1,500 to $5,000.

The high percentage of out-of-field teaching in the state was of significant concern to the MCFT. To address this issue, the commission believes the state should develop better mechanisms for tracking and counting teachers who are out of field, in addition to establishing goals for reducing provisional certification, allowing exceptions only when teachers are actively pursuing additional certification or endorsements. The need for effective data on the quality of teaching is a recurring theme for many states. MCFT encouraged the state to establish incentives for teachers to seek National Board certification by incorporating National Board certification into alternative procedures for attainment of continuing licensure.

Missouri has been a leader in the area of teacher professional development. In 1993, the state mandated that 1 percent of local systems' funds be spent on professional development and 1 percent of state funds be allocated to provide statewide professional development activities. Local districts have discretion and control over content while maintaining a secure funding source. Little data currently exists, however, regarding where and how these

funds are being spent. MCTF argued strongly for the interconnectedness of teacher preparation standards and ongoing professional development. Missouri has established regional professional development centers affiliated with several state universities. The Missouri inventory suggested that more professional development should to be set aside for technology training. MCFT urged the state to increase grant support for professional development around technology, even if this means earmarking a portion of state funds specifically to integrate technology into the classroom.

Similar to North Carolina, Missouri cited difficulty with recruiting and retaining quality teachers in low-performing districts. The inventory set explicit goals for the state to ensure more equity in the distribution of teachers across districts. MCFT argued that the state has a responsibility to assist financially disadvantaged school districts with continued support for minimum salaries, professional development and career ladder programs. The commission also cited the importance of business and community partnerships for public education. MCFT sees one solution in the creation of more alternative routes to teaching. "The state must attract into the profession nontraditional recruits, in addition to students of traditional college age and background. Military retirees, individuals seeking new careers in mid-life, couples considering shared jobs, and former Peace Corps and Americorps volunteers are just a few of the groups who form a bank of potential classroom teachers." MCFT contends that the state needs to encourage flexibility on the part of higher education institutions to extend accessibility to teacher education programs. However, they cautioned that high standards should not be sacrificed in route to alternative programs.

The Missouri commission concluded that a significant amount of work remains to develop an integrated state policy for teacher quality. "And no one in the commission believes that we can afford to wait any longer to carry forward the reforms begun with the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. The Show-Me Standards, performance assessment, and funding earmarked for professional development of teachers all provide a solid foundation, but alone they do not go far enough toward guaranteeing that every student in Missouri has 'access to a competent and caring teacher'."

Maine's policy inventory focused on reporting the current climate of teacher quality in the state.

Maine

The Maine policy inventory was conducted under the auspices of the Maine Leadership Consortium, a coalition of educational stakeholders, and directed by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute. The consortium cited the prevalence of local control as a difficult issue in conducting the inventory, and agreed that there was a dire need for a central data gathering process in the state. Where Missouri's inventory looked primarily at future recommendations, Maine's focused on reporting the current climate of teacher quality in the state.

Maine has established and implemented statewide standards. Each content area is divided into standards (broad descriptions of the knowledge and skills that students should acquire), and within each is a series of performance indicators that define stages of achieve-

ment within each of the four grade spans. Maine has seen increased student achievement in recent years. The average on the state assessment has increased over the last five years, and Maine students have excelled on the NAEP, consistently outpacing virtually all states. Yet, the inventory notes that Maine showed only a slight gain between those years, falling shy of national and regional rates of improvement.

Maine began working on teaching standards in 1993, with an Initial Teacher Certification Pilot Project. This project, under the auspices of the State Board of Education, directed eight pilot sites to develop outcomes for initial teacher certification. Ten key standards were defined for what teachers should know and do to help students achieve state standards.

Maine has made significant inroads for linking teacher certification to state student standards.

Citing the effect of local school district control, the inventory describes "no statewide governance" or professional standards boards. Although state institutions are reviewed every five years, the state has no power to close schools of education. Maine has made significant inroads for linking teacher certification to state student standards. In 1989, a process for evaluating teacher preparation programs was enacted. This process requires teacher education programs to incorporate state standards.

The Maine inventory highlights a persistent problem among many states—insufficient statewide data on teacher practices. The inventory noted, " ... what Maine lacks is any thorough survey or documentation of teaching practices in the state." Maine did report that in 1995, 32 percent of their teaching force had advanced degrees (versus 47 percent nationwide) and in 1994-95, 65 percent of Maine teachers were over 40 years of age, an increase from 54 percent in 1990.

The inventory also noted low salaries for teachers. Increases in teacher salaries from 1994 trail the rate of inflation and increased retirement contributions mandated by the state, as well as benefit cost increases to offset gains. Furthermore, large disparities exist between districts. A teacher with a bachelor's degree and no teaching experience earns $18,000 in the lower paying systems, but $29,807 in other districts.

Similar to Missouri and North Carolina, Maine noted difficulty in developing and implementing state policy for professional development due to local control issues. The Maine inventory indicated great variance among programs, funding and requirements for professional development services. The report in Maine found that, despite changes made 10 years ago in the state recertification process, many teachers remain on a "life certificate" and are not required to participate in professional development.

Maine does not have statewide incentives for teachers who are pursuing National Board certification. The inventory noted that the University of Maine is moving toward a professional development school model. The redesign will create professional development partnerships with three to five systems directed at each site's needs. State funding for professional development in Maine comes mainly from federal sources and regional partnerships. The inventory notes that one system allocated 5 percent of its yearly budget to professional

development, but other, less affluent systems have made deep cuts in professional development funds.

Through the inventory process, the Maine commission discovered several areas where accurate, comprehensive data did not exist. The inventory concluded with four suggestions for future research. First, the commission urged the state to develop a central database to collect and analyze district and school level data. Secondly, the commission noted a shortage of information about teachers from teachers. For example, there was little data on teachers' perspectives concerning professional development or attitudes about school climate. A third area of research would be an extensive study on the relationship between teacher qualifications and student performance. Finally, the Maine commission called for a survey of mentoring and teacher evaluation practices.

Common Themes and Recommendations for Legislators

In the three states highlighted and in all NCTAF partner states, common themes and problems emerged from the inventories.

- *Clear, measurable, objective standards for teacher preparation and licensure are not common.* Although 21 states have created standards for new teachers, they often are focused on classes potential teachers need, rather than on actual teaching performance. States with more rigorous standards still struggle with ensuring that the standards are implemented in teacher preparation programs. Across the inventories, there were few examples of teacher preparation programs that were denied accreditation for not meeting state standards. For example, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission reviewed 353 teacher education programs from 1995—when new teacher education standards went into effect—through summer 1997. Although several programs were put on probation, only one was denied

- *Student and teacher standards are not well aligned.* Even in states that have strong standards for students and teachers, the inventories indicated that these expectations were not well aligned. Little evidence of what students should know and how educators can teach those standards was documented. According to the inventories, the creation of each set of standards was a distinct and isolated process.

- *Teacher supply and demand varies tremendously across school districts.* Most states have wide disparities in the distribution of teachers, with multiple applicants in some districts and severe shortages in others. Teacher recruitment and retention was cited as especially acute in both urban and rural areas. North Carolina's inventory is indicative of the ramifications of this problem. School systems with high proportions of low-performing schools are more likely to have teachers who are less qualified—out-of-field and "underprepared" (provisional and initial licensure endorsements). Several scholarships and the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program assist the state in recruiting teachers into the field, but these programs do not require teaching candidates to work in hard to

Most states have wide disparities in the distribution of teachers, with multiple applicants in some districts and severe shortages in others.

staff schools and districts. Issues of the portability of benefits and years of experience provide additional barriers to moving teachers into low supply areas, according to the inventories.

The NCTAF policy inventories provide insight into issues that legislatures will be facing as they continue to debate issues that work to increase the quality of state teaching corps.

- *Data across the states is not available on several issues.* Most states do not gather data for a variety of indicators, especially those in which districts are given substantial control over such areas as t .acher recruitment and retention and professional development offerings and expenditures. For example, while Indiana spends 1.8 percent and Missouri spends 1 percent of state education funds on professional development, there is little data on how local school districts are spending these funds on offerings for teachers. Several states that conducted the inventory could not compile information about either the state share or total professional development funding. Difficulties also arose around the definitions used in data collection, making it difficult to compare states. Terms such as teaching out-of-field or professional development were used differently across the states.

The NCTAF policy inventories provide insight into issues that legislatures will be facing as they continue to debate issues that work to increase the quality of state teaching corps. States have been addressing teacher quality through legislation that provides more rigorous licensure and professional development requirements and to establish recruitment programs to diversify the teaching profession. The inventory process has provided NCTAF partner states—and, hopefully, other states as well—with information that can target new policy areas such as the alignment of standards and distribution of teachers.

State Legislative Reports

"State Crime Legislation: 1998" (Vol. 23, No. 19) (ISBN 1-58024-006-2)	November 1998
"State Child Support Programs: Necessity Inspires Ingenuity" (Vol. 23, No. 20) (ISBN 1-58024-007-0)	November 1998
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"Improving Teacher Quality: NCTAF Policies" (Vol. 24, No. 9) (ISBN 1-58024-033-X)	December 1999

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